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ABSTRACT

The functions, roles and responsibilities, and services of school media centers and public libraries at the local and state levels are succinctly discussed, and supportive functions and services provided by the State Library Commissicr cf Icwa and the Department of Public Instruction are indicated. Also enumerated are recommendations for school media centers and public libraries regarding site location and facilities, bookmobile services, classroom visits to public libraries, funding, areas of cooperation for community-wide programs, and establishing good lines of communication. This is a revised editicr of the 1966 publication, "Distinctive Functicns of School and Public Libraries." (JPF)

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DISTINCTIVE FUNCTIONS

OF

SCHOOL MEDIA CENTERS AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES

PREPARED BY
THE IOWA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
AND
STATE LIBRARY COMMISSION

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Mary Jo Bruett

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

Revised Edition
of
Distinctive Functions of School and Public Libraries
1966

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1978

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The public library extends its services to all people.

The school media center is a unique instructional agency designed solely for children and young people engaged in a learning program and for the staff that administers that program.

"Public libraries and school libraries are part of a network of library facilities, and should work together to provide coordinated and complete service for children and young people."

Public Library Service, a Guide to Evaluation with Minimum Standards. American Library Association, 1956. p. 23.

I. FUNCTIONS

A. FUNCTIONS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

1. School Media Center

The school media center is a service center designed for use of elementary, middle school, junior high and senior high students teachers and administrators. Its distinctive function is its instructional role. It supports the curriculum and meets educational needs by providing a rich variety of materials, equipment and services. It is sometimes called an instructional materials center both because students learn library or media center skills and because they can read, view, and listen for knowledge and enjoyment, choosing from a variety of media. It is also frequently styled library, or library media center. Instruction, formal or informal, enables the librarian or media specialist and teachers to teach students to use material with discrimination, judgment and appreciation.

There are two major emphases in the school media center. There is the opportunity to furnish the intellectual atmosphere and the materials to help students develop an appreciation of good books and a love of reading. Curricular and independent study needs are met by a variety of books, periodicals, pamphlets, reference, and audiovisual materials accessible to students and teachers throughout the school day. The quantity of material is designed to satisfy the demands of individual or classroom projects.

Teachers use the school media center as a resource, preparation and planning center. Teachers and administrators consult with the librarian or media specialist on evaluation, selection and utilization of materials and equipment but the final responsibility for selection and evaluation is that of the media specialist or librarian.

Provision for excellent school media services is basically the responsibility of the local school board which delegates authority for administration of this program to its superintendent. The superintendent and the library or media supervisor and/or the library media specialists, work together to plan budget, quarters and equipment purchases.

2. PUBLIC LIBRARY

The public library is designed to serve the reading and informational needs of all people of all ages in its service area. Its collection and services provide free access to the working, educational, recreational, and leisure time needs of the entire community. Public libraries have both print and nonprint materials for easy circulation. It is the community's major center for reliable information for a clientele that reaches from pre-school to senior citizens.

Citizen use of the public library requires that it have distinct physical characteristics. It should be located near major traffic arteries and have adequate public parking. The entire building should be accessible for the physically handicapped and in a location that entices the user to come into the informal atmosphere of the public library.

The use of the public library is voluntary and services and materials for all users are planned to satisfy their individual interests.

B. FUNCTIONS AT THE STATE LEVEL

1. STATE LIBRARY COMMISSION OF IOWA

The State Library aids and encourages public libraries through the development of regional networks to provide more efficient and effective utilization of resources. The consultant staff is available to assist public libraries by means of consultant visits, workshops, institutes, conferences, and evaluations. The library is responsible for developing standards for the improvement of public service.

The State Library provides additional supportive library services for all types of libraries throughout the state. The State Library coordinates the Iowa Library Information Teletype Exchange (I-LITE) which provides interlibrary loan access for patrons of the public and college libraries. The State Library's collection of books, periodicals, and records are available to patrons of all types of libraries throughout the state. The state film collection is accessible to patrons through local public libraries. The State Library encourages the development of all types of library service throughout the state.

2. DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

The Department of Public Instruction provides services to strengthen and stimulate the development of school media services and Area School (Community College) learning resource centers.

It develops administrative rules and standards for local district and Area Education Agency and Community College media services. Consultant staff is available for field visits, conferences, inservice training and program evaluations at the preschool, elementary, secondary and community college levels and to higher education institutions training teachers, school librarians and media specialists.

The Iowa Network for Obtaining Resource Materials for Schools (INFORMS), which is based in the Educational Media Section of the Department, provides computer-assisted reference service for school teachers and administrators. Area Education Agency Media Center (AEAMC) personnel serve as liaison or negotiators between the local schools and the INFORMS program.

The Area Education Agency Media Centers were developed to provide supplemental collection, audiovisual production and printing services to local schools and districts. They also provide media related consultative services in their own areas. The Department of Public Instruction has the responsibility for program oversight for these services. The Department has encouraged and supported the development of the Cooperative Network of Inservice Resources (CNIR), a collection of inservice materials, basically audiovisual, which serves most of the Area Education Agencies.

None of the services of the Department, the AEAMC's, the public library or the Regional Public Library network should be construed as a substitute for a media center at the local school or building level.

3. COOPERATION

The State Library Commission of Iowa and the Department of Public Instruction cooperate whenever possible to encourage the development of excellent library service for all Iowans.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Public Library boards, school boards and administrators should establish lines of communication to keep each other informed of changes in policy with which they are mutually concerned.

There should be provision for remedial action whenever a conflict in interest arises between the two agencies.

B. School and public librarians or media specialists should work together to formulate an overall community wide program of library development and to consider mutual problems such as:

1. Definition of respective responsibilities for materials, equipment and services to answer curriculum and individual requests.

2. Responsibility for teaching and implementing library or media center skills.

3. Determination of that most effective scheduling of hours open.

4. Education to insure proper library or media center conduct.

5. Cooperative planning to prevent mutilation and loss of materials and equipment

C. School and public libraries each having unique missions and responsibilities, should generally be financed and administered separately.

1. The local school administration is responsible for school library media centers in relation to the community's entire educational effort.

2. The public library board is responsible for public library service designed to meet the needs of the entire community.

3. Experience has shown that joint financing and operation have not been successful in meeting the needs of either students or adults.

4. Administrative, budgeting, and even political difficulties can be avoided by separate operation.

D. School media centers and public libraries should be housed in separate buildings.

1. The public library should be located in or near a commercial area with adequate parking in that area.

2. School media centers or libraries, which must of necessity be in or near the building they serve, should be located where they will be most accessible to students, teachers and administrators.

3. The informal public library atmosphere is more conducive to adult reading and study than the more hectic learning laboratory atmosphere of the school library or media center.

4. In joint libraries, the training of the staff, budget allocations, collection, demands for service, and the service given will be dominated by the needs of one group with a corresponding loss to the other.

E. Public library bookmobile service should not be considered as a substitute for centralized school media service.

1. Such a program should be planned to introduce people of all ages to public library service.

2. It should be developed or continued in areas where there is no library service only if careful study and evaluation demonstrate that it will not inhibit the growth of adequate school library programs.

F. Frequent classroom visits to the public library should not be considered as a substitute for centralized school media service.

1. Such visits should be intended to acquaint the student with the personnel, collection and organization of the public library.

2. They should emphasize the public library's role as a source of a wide range of materials.

G. School media centers and public libraries should devise ways, separately and collectively, to keep the entire community informed of their goals and needs.